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SUBJ: REQUEST FOR NICARAGUAN SPECIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE.

*SNIE) (U)

1. (U) AS I STATED IN MY PRESENTATION TO THE CHIEFS ON 4 JUN, I FEEL A COMMUNITY-WIDE EFFORT IS NEEDED TO PREPARE A SNIE ON NICARAGUA. MY PARTICULAR CONCERNS ARE OUTLINED IN THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS.
2. (S/NF) RECENT COMBAT ACTIVITY UNDERTAKEN BY NICARAGUAN MILITARY FORCES ALONG THE BORDER OF HONDURAS AND, MORE RECENTLY, COSTA RICA HAVE REPRESENTED THE MOST AGGRESSIVE INITIATIVES OF THE YEAR. THE MAY ATTACKS ON FDN POSITIONS IN THE LAS VEGAS SALIENT AND THE ONGOING (SINCE 26 MAY) ATTACKS IN THE COSTA RICA BORDER REGION HAVE SEVERAL POINTS IN COMMON.
3. (S/NF) IN BOTH INSTANCES, THE SANDINISTAS CHOSE A PERIOD OF PERCEIVED CONTRA WEAKNESS AND ATTEMPTED TO DEAL A CRIPPLING BLOW. IN BOTH CASES, THE SANDINISTAS WERE AT LEAST PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL. IN THE NORTH, THE SANDINISTAS GAINED THE POLITICAL GOAL OF DISRUPTING THE FDN HIERARCHY AND LOGISTICS FLOW BY FORCING THE HONDURANS TO MOVE THE FDN FROM ESTABLISHED BASE CAMPS AND LOC'S. IN THE SOUTH, THE POLITICAL GOAL OF DISRUPTING THE ALREADY SHAKY FR'S POWER BASE WAS APPARENTLY ACHIEVED BY PHYSICALLY OCCUPYING FR'S BASE CAMPS AND DISPERSING THE REMNANTS OF EDEN PASTORA'S ARMY.
4. (S/NF) THE SANDINISTA APPROACH TO THIS GOAL WAS OPENLY ATTACKING THE TERRITORY OF HER NEIGHBORS, WHICH FORCED THE HONDURAN AND COSTA RICAN GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE ACTIONS THAT WOULD FORCE OPEN DISCUSSION OF THE "CONTRA PROBLEM" IN THEIR COUNTRIES. FROM THIS VIEW THE OPERATIONS WERE AT LEAST A PARTIAL SUCCESS. THE SANDINISTAS HAVE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THEY WILL NOT HESITATE TO CROSS A NEIGHBOR'S BORDER, ATTACK THE MILITARY FORCES, AND DISRUPT THE CIVILIAN POPULACE, IF IT MEANS THEY CAN ACHIEVE THEIR POLITICAL GOALS.
5. (S/NF) DURING THE FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF 1985, WE HAVE SEEN THE INCURSIONS INCREASE IN FREQUENCY, SIZE OF FORCE, AND LEVEL OF VIOLENCE. AS THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE OR NO RETRIBUTION, WE EXPECT THE SANDINISTAS TO BECOME MORE BRAZEN IN THEIR CROSS-BORDER ACTIVITIES

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WITH COMPANY-SIZE ELEMENTS, SUPPORTED BY ARTILLERY, ATTACKING TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY AND SURGICAL STRIKES ON KEY CONTRA POSITIONS AS WELL AS NORMAL PURSUIT OF THE CONTRAS.

6. (S/NF) WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE EPS, PROCEEDING FROM BEING A BAND OF GUERRILLAS IN 1979, TOWARD BEING A CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCE IN 1985. WE ARE WITNESSING THE GROWTH OF COMBINED ARMS OPERATIONS THAT COULD SOON BEGIN LIMITED COORDINATED OPERATIONS TO INCLUDE INFANTRY, ARTILLERY AND ATTACK HELICOPTER OPERATIONS AS WELL AS ARMOR PROTECTION OF CONVOY MOVEMENTS ALONG ESTABLISHED LOC'S. NICARAGUAN MI-8/HIP PILOTS SHOULD SOON BE FULLY COMBAT READY (USING A SOVIET MODEL OF TWO YEARS COCKPIT TIME). THE MI-24'S COULD BE USED IMMEDIATELY, IF WE ASSUME CUBAN PILOTS AND AVAILABLE MUNITIONS (NICARAGUAN PILOTS PROBABLY

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 WON'T BEGIN LIVE FIRE TRAINING UNTIL NOV OR DEC USING THE CUBAN MODEL).

7. (S/NF) BY JAN 86, PUNTE HUETE AIRFIELD WILL BE FULLY OPERATIONAL AS THE FAS MAIN OPERATING BASE; BLUEFIELDS AND PUERTO CABEZAS AIRFIELDS WILL BE OPERATIONAL AS DEPLOYMENT AND RESUPPLY BASES; WIWILI, LA ROSITA, AND ESTELI WILL BE AVAILABLE AS FORWARD LOGISTICS BASES FOR ATTACK HELICOPTER OPERATIONS. ADDITIONALLY, ROAD CONSTRUCTION NEAR KEY FDN LOGISTICS NODES SOUTH OF THE HONDURAN BORDER WILL ALLOW DEPLOYMENT AND MOBILITY OF BM-21'S, ARMOR, AND TOWED ARTILLERY FOR INDIRECT FIRE SUPPORT.

8. (S/NF) THE BLI (IRREGULAR WARFARE BN) HAS BEEN THE PRIMARY TOOL USED TO FIGHT THE FDN. GENERALLY SPEAKING, WHEREVER THERE ARE CONTRAS, A BLI IS NEARBY. THERE ARE CURRENTLY 13 BLI'S. ELEVEN OF THESE WERE INAUGURATED SINCE JUN 84. BY JAN 86, WE ANTICIPATE A GROWTH TO 16 BLI'S.

9. (S/NF) AS LONG AS THE FDN HAS BOOTS AND BULLETS THERE WILL BE COMBAT ACTIVITY, PRIMARILY WITH THE BLI'S. HISTORICALLY, WE HAVE SEEN AN AVERAGE OF 100 COMBAT ACTIONS PER MONTH COUNTRY-WIDE; HOWEVER, DURING THE FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF 1985 THERE WERE AN AVERAGE OF 150 COMBAT ACTIONS PER MONTH. MOST OF THESE ACTIONS ARE SMALL CLASHES, HIT AND RUN ATTACKS, AND AMBUSHES RESULTING IN AN ESTIMATED THREE CASUALTIES PER CONTACT. BOTH THE SANDINISTAS AND ANTI-SANDINISTAS CURRENTLY APPEAR TO BE PREPARING FOR MAJOR OPERATIONS DURING THE COMING RAINY SEASON. WE BELIEVE THE INCREASED LEVEL OF VIOLENCE THUS FAR SEEN IN 1985 WILL CONTINUE THROUGH THE RAINY SEASON. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THE SANDINISTA CAPABILITIES MAY IMPROVE TO THE EXTENT THAT COMBINED ARMS EMPLOYMENT WILL BECOME THE NORM. ADDITIONALLY, EMPLOYMENT OF THESE FORCES, PARTICULARLY TO THE NORTH, WILL BECOME COMMON PRACTICE AS NEW FACILITIES BECOME OPERATIONAL. WE BELIEVE THE SANDINISTAS MAY MOUNT A LARGE OFFENSIVE IN AN EFFORT TO CRUSH THE INSURGENCY DURING THE EARLY PORTION OF THE COMING DRY SEASON (EARLY 1986). WE ARE CONCERNED, GIVEN THE SANDINISTA'S GROWING PROPENSITY TOWARD CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS, THAT SOME COMBINED ARMS ACTIVITY WILL SPILL OVER THE BORDER, PRIMARILY INTO HONDURAS.

10. (S/NF) THEREFORE, I RECOMMEND A NICARAGUAN SNIE FOCUSING ON THE POTENTIAL FOR A DRY SEASON '86 OFFENSIVE AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR COMBINED ARMS OPERATIONS BOTH IN AND OUT OF NICARAGUA. AS IN THE CASE OF THE PREVIOUS SNIE'S, I AM PREPARED TO INPUT AND SEND MY ANALYSTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SNIE PROCESS.

DECL: OADR

END OF MESSAGE

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